



Speech by

Hon. M. FOLEY

MEMBER FOR YERONGA

Hansard 4 March 1999

HEINER DOCUMENTS

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (6.43 p.m.): If there is any evidence of child abuse it should be fully and properly investigated. That is why the Government moved to establish, under the Commissions of Inquiry Act, the Forde inquiry: so that any evidence there might be could be fully and properly investigated.

This motion before the Parliament urges the establishment of another commission of inquiry. It does not ask that that commission of inquiry investigate child abuse or paedophilia; it asks that that commission of inquiry investigate the alleged destruction of documents for the purpose of a cover-up.

The question posed by the member for Gladstone seems a compelling one: "Why not have an inquiry and get it over with once and for all?" The difficulty is that there are two limbs to that question. Why not have an inquiry? Well, that was the compelling reason that led, no doubt, to the CJC having an inquiry. Why not have an inquiry? That was the reason that led to the Parliamentary Criminal Justice Committee having an inquiry into the Criminal Justice Commission. Why not have an inquiry? That was the reason for having two Senate select committees, a Senate privileges committee and so on and so on look at this matter.

The point is that the first limb of the question—"Why not have an inquiry?"—has been posed many times. It has been answered in the affirmative many times. But however many times it is answered in the affirmative, the second limb of the question—"and clear it up and move on"—simply does not follow. This requires some assessment of the evidence.

This House has previously considered this matter in a debate. Since then, the only piece of new evidence—if I may use that term in its broadest possible sense—is that advanced by the member for Indooroopilly and the member for Surfers Paradise in their quote of Mr Comben in his statements on the Sunday program of 21 February 1999. They read the relevant passages into the record and they rely upon that for the assertion of evidence of child abuse.

What they did not do was to inform the House of what Mr Comben said the very next day in the Carolyn Tucker program when he was asked—

"So you were quite surprised to see how your comments were reported or what was reported around them?"

He answered—

"Startled, amazed."

He went on in a later part of the interview to say—

"We were talking about getting rid of these documents because they were defamatory between the staff members accusing each other of all sorts of things about their professional lives. It was not about child abuse in any way."

He went on to say—

"There is nothing that could in any way be constituted as evidence. There is nothing there above common scuttlebutting rumour at a very low level, matter-of-fact stuff as you pass in the corridor."

That is what is not put before the House by the member for Indooroopilly and the member for Surfers Paradise.

There is one further point that needs to be cleared up. The member for Indooroopilly and the member for Surfers Paradise have attacked the Premier for not providing Cabinet documents to the Morris inquiry. May I say this: those very documents were tabled in this House and nothing in those documents indicates the slightest scintilla of evidence of child abuse. It is the most stunning hypocrisy for the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Indooroopilly to come into this Chamber and urge a course of action which they failed to take themselves.

Mr BEANLAND: I rise to a point of order. There was no CJC inquiry; it was purely an investigation—

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.
